

✓ **DIALOGUES** 8

BETWEEN

TWO CHRISTIAN MINISTERS,

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN

THE SAINTS AND THE RIGHTEOUS,

AND ON

ETERNAL LIFE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND FAITH.

CONTAINING

Some NEW THOUGHTS on these POINTS.

Submitted to the Judgment of the Learned, for the Sake of
investigating the Truth; and with a view to conciliate the
Minds of Christian Professors to one another.

Y O R K:

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DIALOGUES, &c.

DIALOGUE I.

N. **T**HE Scriptures speak but of two places, heaven, and hell. Some, when they die, go to Christ, and are happy; the rest of the world will be damned and miserable: For as two places only are spoken of, so there are only two sorts of people mentioned, the righteous and the wicked.

O. Do you think that all the righteous will go to Christ when they die?

N. Most certainly. Don't you think so?

O. I don't know. I am not clear in that opinion. I have my doubts, and wish to have them solved. I am inclined to think there are more than two sorts of people with respect to the next life. Christ said, *In my Father's house are many mansions.*

N. So there may be, and yet but one house. There will be different degrees of happiness as well as misery. The righteous will partake of happiness, and the portion of the wicked will be that of torment or misery, and in both cases according to different degrees, as the state of mankind is various with respect to virtue and vice. It is strange you should suppose more than two sorts of people because some will be much happier than others. According to this rule there may be an hundred sorts.

O. What I mean is this. From Scripture it appears that there is a class of people of a peculiar kind, that will not only partake of happiness beyond those denominated righteous; but so essentially different, that every member of that class will be happier than any one in the other who may also be saved; as he that was least in the kingdom of God was greater than John the Baptist. This class I mean is called a Peculiar People—The Saints, the Elect, the First-born.—If it were not so, why should we find the distinction in Hebrews, between *the general assembly of the church of the first-born written in heaven, and the spirits of just men made perfect*. The first-born are the first-fruits, typified in the Old Testament and mentioned in the new.

N. I wish you to go on. I should like to hear something further on the subject.

O. This class I suppose to be as distinct from the general body of the righteous, as the Levites were distinct from the other tribes of Israel. Indeed, the Levites appear to be a type of this people, in that they were separated from the others, for the special service of the tabernacle. They had no inheritance among the others, because the Lord was their portion, as Christ is the portion of his people. But what makes it look still more plain, is that of the Levites being given to Aaron the high-priest instead of all the first-born, in the same manner as the elect, or first-born under the gospel, are given to Christ our High-Priest to be his peculiar people.—Christ is called their brother. *Whom God did foreknow he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many*

brethren: And they are given to Christ in as special a manner as the Levites were given to Aaron.

N. One inference you would draw from this opinion, if you could establish it, would be to reconcile us to the doctrine of election; for it would make that, or predestination not to be so frightful a thing as it has appeared: because, if predestination be only a designation to some special privileges above the rest of the world, without respect to reprobating those who are not so favoured, there can be nothing offensive in it.

O. But let us leave this point till we have discovered, if we can, what the truth is, in respect to the other.

N. I have observed, with pleasure, that those who hold in election, have in a great measure left off reprobating the non-elect, so as to consign them to eternal misery. Pray go on.

O. Another thing I will mention as a confirmation of this suggestion, and that is what St. Peter says in his first Epistle. *The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God; and if it begin at us, what shall be the end of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear?* Now it is not said of the saints that they will scarcely be saved, but, on the contrary, that they will be abundantly saved, or may, if they do such and such things. *For so an entrance shall be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* 2 Peter. So also St. Paul writes. *If through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one,*

much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. For the saints will not only enjoy life, but they will reign in life; for they will be made kings and priests. And as it has been observed by one, if there are kings, we may conceive of others who are not so.

St. Paul declares that the saints shall judge the world: and this leads me to speak of a very material point; that of Christ sitting in judgment. We may observe in the 14th of Revelations, of a *Lamb* which stood on Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written on their foreheads; and a little further we find that *these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb.* What I apprehend by their following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, is meant, that the saints when they die, depart and go to Christ, to the place which he hath prepared for them in his Father's house: And that, according to other scriptures, when he descends from heaven with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, these saints descend with him, and sit with him when he sits in judgment; and this his own words seem to confirm. *When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right-hand, and the goats on his left.* Now let us observe that St. Paul speaks of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints; and that the saints shall judge the world, and that the Lord hath promised that he that

overcometh shall sit with him in his throne; as well as what is said to the Apostles about their sitting on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and then we may conclude that the saints will sit with him in judgment. *Then shall the King say unto them on his right-hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger and ye took me in, &c.—Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, &c. And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* It is commonly supposed, that his meaning here was; as ye have done it to one another, ye have done it unto me. But I think he meant his brethren sitting with him in judgment, when he said, *In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.* This is a natural and easy construction; whereas the other is forced and unnatural to suppose that the words, *these my brethren*, should mean those before him, whom he was then judging. The inference is, that the saints, or elect, are a distinct body from the righteous, as they are commonly termed, not but what the saints are righteous too; but every righteous man is not a saint.

N. I will consider of what you have said, especially as I perceive that you make the Scriptures the ground of your opinion. In the mean time I shall be glad to know wherein you make the difference more particularly between these two classes to consist.

O. In the first place, I suppose, the saints will partake of happiness before the others, being the first-fruits; and that they will partake of the first resurrection, and have the same resurrection which Abraham had. Our Lord, when on earth, said, *the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.* I see no reason to interpret this as meaning the dead in sin, when it was literally fulfilled at his own resurrection, when the graves were opened, and many bodies of saints arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. And we have reason to believe that they went with him to heaven; because it is said, *when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.* Our Lord, at the same time he used these words, added also, *Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth;* distinguishing between the resurrection to be accomplished in his day and what would happen hereafter. The saints do now in this life partake of eternal life, which I doubt may not be the happy lot of other righteous people; for we see and know many honest and just men, who can give no account of their having passed from death unto life; that have not received the spirit of adoption, as they know or believe, and will rather ridicule the idea of it, merely because they have not experienced it, and because they see the irregularities and slips of many professing people. And these just men, and with some degree of devotion too, will be more exemplary in their moral conduct than many of the saints.

I cannot help thinking that this is a very good argu-

ment in support of my opinion, because it accounts for what many have been at a loss how to account for. These just men seem to be in the state of one mentioned in the Psalms, who prays thus, *Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the felicity of thy chosen, and rejoice with thy people, and give thanks with thine inheritance.* Here is a prayer for the peculiar blessing I am speaking of; and yet there was no impropriety in making it, because Abraham prayed for a blessing on Ishmael, though he could not have that which was predetermined for Isaac; and Esau prayed for a blessing after his brother Jacob had obtained the great one. *Bless me, even me also, O my Father.* And they both obtained inferior blessings.

Yet these just men are commonly reckoned among those who will be damned and perish, unless there should be an alteration; and it is not meant an alteration in their moral conduct, but with-respect to their spiritual life—to their vital sensation; though others are much puzzled with respect to their state:—Yet in one sense, and that a true one, they do perish, for I suppose they have no life, and will continue so till their resurrection; but then they do not perish everlastingly. One hundred and forty and four thousand are mentioned in another place also in the Revelations. These were sealed, that is, twelve thousand of each of the tribes of Israel. And after this St. John beheld, and *to a great multitude whom no man could number, of all nations, and people, and kindreds, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, salvation to our God, which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb.* One of the

elders told St. John—*These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, &c.* Some among the universalists have supposed this passage has respect to their doctrine; but however it be, we may perceive that a distinction is held forth with respect to salvation; for the twelve thousand out of each tribe appear to have been sealed before the appearance of this great multitude; besides, that the numbers show there was a difference between them.

N. You said something of Abraham's resurrection: What did you mean by it?

O. My meaning is, that Abraham appears to have had all the resurrection that he will ever have. And this we may gather from our Saviour's words upon the subject. The Sadducees (which denied there was any resurrection) came and questioned him about it; and after they had done, Jesus answering, said unto them: *The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage: But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him.* What does our Saviour mention this for? It is to prove the resurrection, as he himself says. *Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush.* But what proof is Abraham being alive of the resurrection, unless we consider Abraham as having partaken of the resurrection? If his being alive is the proof of his resurrection,

then was Abraham already raised. It was for this reason I said the saints will have the same resurrection as Abraham. They will not die, and wait for the resurrection of the just, but when they sleep in the Lord, as it is expressed, or have *the earthly house of this tabernacle dissolved, they have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* And while here, they groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with their house which is from heaven. Now it is God who hath wrought them to be fit for it. But I do not take this to be the case with others; and therefore the dispute between the soul-sleepers, and those who maintain a continued consciousness, might be easily solved, if they would take into consideration, that it will not happen to all alike with respect to death; and then it would be found that the many texts of Scripture, which each party applies, generally will not suit their purpose, because some of these texts relate to the dead in general, and some to the elect only.

N. You observed, I think, that the Levites, under the law, were a type of the elect. Now I thought that they had been considered as a type of gospel ministers.

O. But may not the house or family of Aaron be rather considered as such? There is a distinction observed between the house of Aaron and the house of Levi. Aaron's family, it is true, were of the tribe of Levi, but the priesthood was confined to Aaron's family alone, Aaron himself being the high-priest, and his sons, priests under him. Sometimes we get light from one single expression. In the 5th chapter of the 2d Corinthians, and the 17th verse, it is thus written. *Where-*

fore come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. This, I think, refers to a passage in the Old Testament, where it is said, *Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord.* For the Levites were chosen, as before observed, and given to Aaron instead of the first-born, which God claimed as his own, upon the destruction of the first-born in Egypt. The Levites bore the vessels of the sanctuary, and were called upon to be clean: Therefore St. Paul alludes to it when quoting the words of the Lord, he says, *Be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

N. Notwithstanding all you have said, and though we may allow the saints or elect to be a peculiar people, and blessed with greater blessings at present than what you call the righteous, yet I am not reconciled to your notion of the righteous not living after this body is dissolved, till at the day of a general or future resurrection.

O. What do you suppose is meant by our Lord's saying, *It shall be recompensed to him at the resurrection of the just:* and by this, *There shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.* But in order to clear up this matter, let us see whether there be not many places of Scripture, besides what I have mentioned, where the righteous, or some seemingly religious, appear not to be possessed of eternal life.

Take the following texts. Psalm cxix. *Behold my delight is in thy commandments:* (Here is surely a righteous man) *O quicken me in thy righteousness. Let thy loving mercy*

come also unto me, O Lord; even thy salvation. Again, O let my soul live and it shall praise thee. These are the prayers of one seeking after righteousness—of one hungering and thirsting for it—of one possessed only of his own righteousness, and seeking for that our Saviour alludes to when he said, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* For there is a peculiar righteousness necessary to constitute life, and that is called the righteousness of God, a righteousness which St. Paul desired to be found in, and that without his own righteousness, which he considered but as dung or dross in comparison; and which, though he had considered it as gain, yet in respect to that which is of God he counted as loss. Isaiah li. *Hearken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord, look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, look unto the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.* And in a few verses after it is said, *Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings; for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.* In these two verses we find a distinction between those who seek after righteousness, and those who are possessed of it; that is of this righteousness which is of and from God.—The latter are subject to revilings, as we know also from experience, and that because they belong to Christ. The many Christian and godly sects, that from time to time have arisen up in the world, are subject to taunts and revilings, different

from others that are in good repute, and this because they are of the family of Christ or his household. And they are subject also to unusual chastisements. *My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him : for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not : But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons,—that is Ishamaelites. David said, I know of very faithfulness thou hast caused me to be troubled. But why of faithfulness? because God had promised him the kingdom, and troubles were necessary to make him fit for it. Therefore they who know righteousness are those in whom God hath written his laws : They know God, they are possessed of his love, and consequently of eternal life : and being subject to revilings are cautioned in the text not to regard them.*

We may bring in also the case of Cornelius the Centurion. He was a just man, and devout, and one that gave much alms to the people ; and yet St. Peter was sent to tell him words whereby he and his house should be saved. But if he could have been saved without hearing the gospel, there was no occasion to send it to him. And yet I think if he had not heard it, he would have stood in judgment among the righteous, and had his lot with them. Noah also was a just man, and on being ordered to prepare an ark, he by faith obeyed, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith ; a superior righteousness to what he had before : and yet he was denominated a righteous man before he built the ark, and became heir of the righteousness by faith : For it is written before ; *Noah was a just man, and*

perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God; unless we can suppose that to be a just and a righteous man is not the same thing.

What we may judge from these last observations is, that many just or righteous men appear not to be possessed of eternal life; and if they have not passed from death unto life in this world, the probability is, that they will not live till the resurrection of the just. Perhaps we might get some light in this matter if we could understand what is meant by eternal life; whether it is some vital principle to the soul, as the soul is supposed to be to the body; or whether it is such a life as the Queen of Sheba's, when there was no life in her when she saw the glory and magnificence of Solomon, and, like that of a woman, who having lost a favourite child, is revived by hearing and believing that her child is found. If it be the latter, we may suppose that eternal life is a persuasion that God is reconciled, that he is a friend, and not an enemy. In objection to this it may be said that a false persuasion would give life to the soul, as long as it lasted, as well as a true one. But in favour of it we may say, that faith is said to constitute life, and the being confounded is represented as death: For answerable to these words, *The just shall live by faith, and he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.* It is said elsewhere, *He that believeth on him shall not be confounded; he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed;* as if spiritual death consisted in the fear of God's wrath. *He that believeth on the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him;* that is a sense or fear of God's wrath. If this interpretation could be received it would be very acceptable, because it makes faith not

to be an arbitrary condition, but a necessary one; and we may conclude that God gives this faith to the just to enable them stand before him without confusion; as it is said, *The just shall live by faith. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the world:—For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:* For when the Israelites looked on the brazen serpent they lived; the stings of the fiery serpents were healed, as the stings of sin will be healed by looking upon Christ as our propitiation for it. Agreeably to this I interpret these words, *Isaiah xxxiii. The sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly, he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure.* This I take to be answerable to the saying—*The just shall live by faith;* because to the just will be given a faith in Christ to screen them from the wrath of God, or rather to bear the glory of God, which will be as devouring fire to all unbelievers; for Christ will be to the former as the munitions of rocks.—He will be their defence, their meat and their drink. We may hence also understand this scripture, “*My people perish through lack of knowledge, if eternal life consists in the knowledge of God as a God of love.* This knowledge is not given but to the humble and penitent, and Christ is the author of it: *For as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth*

eth whom he will. They who perish among the just may be called God's people, but they who are quickened by the Son, are only a small part of God's people, as the Levites made but one of the twelve tribes of Israel, and the other tribes were but a small part of the world in general: For, as we may have observed, those who in Isaiah are said to follow after righteousness were called Abraham's children, as well as those who had attained to it, so the just may be Abraham's children; yet not like the saints, the church of Christ, the household of God, with whom judgment now begins in this world; and when they are judged they are chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world.

But now, on the other hand, with respect to the former part of the question, whether spiritual life is some vital principle in the soul, as the soul is to the body: If we judge that to be the case, yet it is not an inherent principle natural to the soul; for, if it was, there would be no difference between the wicked and the saints, whereas eternal life is always spoken of as a happy state, and distinct from that of mankind in general. But we may still consider this principle of life as the effect of knowledge communicated; as, suppose a man in debt to be unhappy from the continual dread of a goal, and to be informed that a certain benevolent man had paid all his debts; this news, as soon as he could believe it, would revive him, make him a new man, and cause him to love his benefactor, and try to please him. And we read that the love of Christ constrains us, and that we love God because he first loved us; which shows that love may be this principle of life, and that it is caused by our knowledge of God's good-

ness towards us: For it is plain from Scripture that the remission of sins is the cause of love, and that in exact proportion to the sins forgiven; but we must know that they are remitted in order to be thus affected, and this perfectly agrees with our Saviour's telling some Jews, who believed on him, that if they continued in his word they should know the truth, and the truth should make them free; which I can readily apprehend, because the faith of Christ, which is called so because he is the author of it, and it hath also respect to him, is given to them that believe or receive the gospel, and this faith enlightens the mind to understand the truth as it is in Jesus, which knowledge causes love, and is the remission of sins, because it sets the mind free, delivering it from all the condemnation thereof.

Therefore we may consider knowledge, producing love, as the principle of life, but whether all the righteous in this world partake of it is the doubtful point. Socrates, and many virtuous Heathens, were ignorant of the gospel, or of that glad tidings of salvation which alone can give life; as, *There is none other name given amongst men whereby we must be saved, but only the name of Jesus Christ, neither is there salvation in any other.* And there are many religious or virtuous people in a Christian land, who know nothing of eternal life from any feeling experience, and will, as before observed, sometimes ridicule the notion of it, as of what may be felt or known; and it is this, among many other reasons, which leads me to believe, that such may be numbered among the righteous hereafter, in the same manner as it is concluded among benevolent people, that it will

be the case of the virtuous Heathen who have never heard the gospel.

N. I will consider of what you have said, and if I discover any error, I will tell you when I see you next; and, if I shall be satisfied with your reasons, will be free to acknowledge it.

O. I shall thank you for your candid opinion, as I aim at the truth; for I can truly declare that, for fourteen years, I sought after knowledge, with as much earnestness and perseverance, as if I had been seeking for hid treasure. But whether I have found it or not, in regard to this point, as a diffident man, I must still doubt, when I consider the many plausible errors that have been introduced into the world.

DIALOGUE II.

N. **W**ELL, Sir, I am come to see you again, to have a little more talk upon the subject we discoursed of the last time we met. I have thought of it much, and have concluded, that among other things, you are under a mistake in supposing eternal life to consist in a persuasion of God's reconciliation, of his being a friend and not an enemy. The comparison you make between a sinner under a sense of his sins, and that of a man's dreading a gaol, on account of his debts, will not hold any further than it respects the distress of them both, and that the sinner will rejoice when he knows that God is reconciled to him as well as the debtor when he knows his debts are paid; but surely there is a greater difference between natural and spiritual things, than will allow us to conclude that eternal or spiritual life is nothing more than that revival which any man may feel from being raised from a state of sorrow and dejection to a more cheerful one, on hearing some good news.

Jesus Christ himself is said to be our life. He said, *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.* Again we read, *He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.* So that nothing short of having Christ himself in our heart is eternal life. Indeed, St. Paul said to the Galatians, *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me:* but then we are to consider the preceding words, *I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ*

liveth in me. It was not faith essentially in itself that gave him life; faith was only the medium, the channel, the door by which Christ, in his spirit, was received into the heart and gave life.

O. But does not our Saviour say, as we read in St. John: *My words they are spirit and they are life*; plainly demonstrating what I have said, that the knowledge conveyed to the soul, of God being reconciled, is life. *My words they are spirit and they are life*; have a reference to his then telling the Jews about his giving his flesh for the life of the world?

Besides, Moses speaking of the law, gives us reason to believe, that if a man would keep the whole law in every point, he would live: Do this and thou shalt live. But why? Because there being nothing to confound him he would have life. In like manner, when he has broken the law and comes to understand that Christ hath made satisfaction for the breach of it, he is restored to life, being put into as good a state with respect to his being confounded through the fear of God's wrath, as if he had perfectly kept the law. We see then, life comes the same way in both cases: In the former, by having never offended God in any one instance; in the latter, by being assured that God, through his Son, is pacified towards him, and this puts him in as good a state as if he had never offended.

N. You will observe, that upon this occasion our Lord said, *The flesh profiteth nothing: it is the spirit that quickeneth: my words, they are spirit and they are life.* He had said a little before, *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.* That is, as I apprehend it, except ye believe that he gave his

flesh and shed his blood for you, ye have no life in you; for thus believing a man receives the flesh and blood into his heart, as he receives food into his body. But you suppose it is this act of believing gives eternal life?

We do not, I find, differ much. The only difference between us is this: You judge a faith in Christ, or a trust in God's mercy, is of itself eternal life; that it is essentially so; whereas, I judge this faith to be only a vehicle of life, and that the spirit of Christ is only essential life, entering through faith as the medium or door. *Christ stands at the door and knocks; if any man hear his voice and open unto him, he will come in.* And I agree with you, that it is necessary to life, that we open this door of faith for his admission. Still it may be said, that we are justified by faith; and also that we are justified by Christ and in Christ; for he must come into the heart, and when he comes in, we become united to him, he dwelling in us, and we in him; and we are thereby justified, and yet through faith.

We are all by nature under condemnation, and spiritually dead. There is a separation between God and our souls. There is a veil of unbelief in the heart, which is the separation. This veil must be burst, before Christ, and the Father through him, can enter; we may judge, because in speaking of sending the Holy Spirit, he said the world could not receive him: *Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not neither knoweth him.* Christ was to give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him; and when he gives life, it is through the faith which he hath wrought in the soul; for he himself, being the quickening spirit,

enters through that faith, as through a channel or door; which being opened, as naturally admits him, as a door being opened, admits the air into a house: Because the separation being removed, the intercourse is opened between God and our souls; from the Father, through the Son, conveying love, joy, peace, and all spiritual blessings. For in Christ *dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*: And of his fulness do we all receive, who are united to him by faith. The blessing of Abraham came on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. *The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* From all which sayings we can only gather, that the faith of Christ is the opening door by which he enters into the heart.

O. I am happy to think that I was not so positive as to prevent my being open to conviction. I am convinced, and satisfied, that this life is to be had only in the Son. And though it be said, *he that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life*, yet it may be, because instantly upon a man's believing in him, life, that is Christ our life comes in. But this belief must be a trust in him for salvation, or a trust in the mercy of God through him, and I am glad that you agree with me in this.

N. I do agree with you in this; because what is meant by the faith of Christ, in the New Testament, is called a trust in the Lord, throughout the Old, and the same blessings are annexed to one, as the other. For to believe in a man is to trust in him. And what St. John writes in his first Epistle, is answerable to this—*These things have I written unto you that believe on the*

name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. For the name Jesus signifies a Saviour, and to believe in his name, is to believe in him as a Saviour, to trust in him for salvation; and that is the same as trusting in the mercy of God, to which, great promises are made in the Old Testament. If this be the case, as I verily believe it is, we may account for many sincere and honest men not having any appearance of having passed from death unto life, notwithstanding their honesty and seeming good desires. They may believe the scriptures to be the word of God, and believe that he sent his Son into the world as a Saviour, and that he was crucified for our sins; yet not being able to lay hold on him as it were by faith, and to trust in him as a Saviour, the intercourse is not opened between God and their souls, and consequently they have no spiritual life. They are only in embryo, like the chicken in the egg, whose aperture is not opened. Some of these may not be far from the kingdom of heaven, which Christ has opened to all believers.

Suppose a man was sent from a far country with an invitation to all, and an offer of lands or other inheritance to as many as would accept the offer and follow him; there is a difference between believing the message which he brought, and that of putting ourselves under his conduct and following him. So many believe in Jesus Christ as God's messenger, yet do not, or cannot venture to trust in him for his safe conduct through the deep waters or a dreary wilderness, with all the obstacles they may meet with in the way: they cannot trust in him for salvation, no more than the Israelites, who perished in the wilderness,

through unbelief. *The heavy wrath of God came upon them, because they believed not in God, and put not their trust in his help.* Psalms.

O. From what you have said about some not being far from the kingdom of God, and your manner of accounting for many honest well meaning-people, not having spiritual or eternal life, I am inclined to think, you mean to confute me also in the first thing which began this conversation, that is, about the righteous not living till a future resurrection.

N. I own to you, I am not satisfied with your opinion upon it.

O. What led me to that opinion, was the state of well meaning men. How could I in my own mind doom to eternal misery, a man whose outward morality exceeded mine? Who was a better husband, a better father, a better master, and a better neighbour than myself? Yet I could not rank such a man amongst the living, because he had no signs of spiritual life, for though he may possess these good qualities, and have respect to religion, yet his thoughts may be chiefly employed on worldly things; and we are told, *to be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded is life and peace.* Besides, some of this sort, instead of knowing among other signs, that they have passed from death unto life, because they love the brethren, show on the contrary, that they hate them: for it is notorious that many seemingly religious, and of good characters, will show more bitterness of spirit towards the godly, than more open sinners. Then not being able to rank them among the living, I had a hope, instead of considering them among the wicked, of placing them among the virtuous heathens at the day of judgment;

and that led me to the thought, that all these were the righteous, and distinct from the saints who come with Christ, and sit with him in judgment.

N. There may be a distinction between the righteous and the saints, and yet both may have eternal life. The latter may be more holy than the righteous, and in a more advanced state of life. *The light of the righteous shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* This perfect day may be that state of holiness which we are exhorted to follow after; *without which no man shall see the Lord.* It is that state, and superior to a common state of salvation, which, perhaps our Saviour alluded to in answering the young man, who asked him what he lacked yet; *Jesus said unto him, if thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.* He had said also at another time, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me;* which we do not find to be the case of many of whom we have good hope of salvation. It is this state of perfection which St. Paul appears to have had in mind when he said, *I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* *Let us therefore as many as be perfect, be thus minded;* and also when he exhorts the disciples, saying, *Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection.* *For Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* And then it is in, and through him we become righteous, and by continuance in the faith become holy: For sanctification is attained to through faith in him, as well as justification or righteousness.

O. I like your sentiments on this point better than I did my own. Still I should be glad to have some more

favourable view of the destiny of what we call honest well-meaning men, than that of their going away into everlasting punishment: for, as you say there are but two sorts of people, the righteous and the wicked, the saints being considered only as a superior kind of righteous; if we cannot reckon these honest men amongst the righteous, and possessing life, then they must *depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*, which is a horrid thought; much more when it respects our neighbours, whom as neighbours we love, than when it concerns the wicked, whose ways we detest, though we cannot but have a love and pity for their souls.

N. Whatever may be their fate, we must abide by the word of God. The Scriptures, in general, speak of two sorts, as opposed one to the other, the righteous and the wicked, (and that in respect to salvation) or the children of God, and the children of the devil: and they tell us, that *there is none righteous, no, not one*; and this is declared that *every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God*; and we read again, that *the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe*. We may, in part, see one reason for this designation, that the whole world should be concluded under sin, and that is this: There is such an infinite disparity between the purity of God, and the most virtuous of men, that the most virtuous could not abide his presence, and therefore must be miserable when he appears; in order, then, that happiness may be conferred on the human race, the greatest degree of which is only to be found in the Divine Presence, it is necessary that every fear of God, as an enemy, must

be banished from the mind, and the love of God substituted in its place. This love is introduced through the knowledge of God's reconciliation, that is, through his remission of sins, which remission, or blotting out of sins, produces love in proportion to the sins pardoned.

Now, had not the Scripture included all under sin, the most virtuous in this life could not have enjoyed the happiness of the next: For there is no law given which could give life, because no man can keep it perfectly, and any imperfection in obedience before such a holy being, must not only exclude him from happiness, but must necessarily create torment in proportion to his disobedience. If then the Scripture had not, by its rigid demands, stopped every mouth, and brought all the world under condemnation, the virtuous, or naturally just man, would never have sued for mercy; because he did not, or could not, see himself under condemnation; and not being humbled from the sight of his sins, he would not be brought into such a state of humiliation, as to make him willing and glad to receive Christ into his heart by faith. All this is agreeable to the promises made to the humble and penitent, to the contrite in heart, to them that hunger and thirst after righteousness; but there would have been none of this hungering and thirsting after righteousness among the naturally just or righteous, if all, every one, Jew and Gentile, had not been under a general condemnation. Therefore Christ came into the world to save sinners; out of love to the world the Father sent the Son, that *whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*; which believing in him is not an arbitrary but a necessary condition;

because, as I said, this faith removes all enmity in the heart and all fear, and opens the door of reconciliation, by which the Lord Jesus enters, and brings all spiritual blessings, which are conferred from time to time according to his will, and according to the improvement of them.

We see, then, that these honest men may be saved as well as others, because Christ came to save them. *Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.* There is no hinderance on the part of God: *He willeth all men to be saved.* The only hinderance is from Satan, the God of this world, who hath blinded the minds of them that believe not; but as God is a higher power than Satan, this blindness, by a proper application, will be removed: For if a man seeks the Lord with all his heart, he will infallibly live; as infallibly as the word of God is true; for he will be enlightened with the light of the living.

O. This I am sensible of, but I was speaking of their condition, in case they should die in their present state; for neither you nor I consider it as a safe one. However commendable their outward carriage may be, and we have no right to suspect their sincerity, still there is a sensible undescribable difference between a carnal and spiritual state; though, in some things, we may attempt a description, and this difference lies in the inner man. A minister of the former cast shall preach a good sermon, that shall be exceedingly admired by those of his turn, and yet be very insipid to those who are spiritually minded: And in like manner another sermon shall be admired by the latter sort and, pronounced enthusiastic by the former, and this owing

to the dissimilarity betwixt being born of the flesh, and born of the Spirit.

N. As there really seems to be this distinction, which is still more sensibly perceived by those who were always reputed morally good before their conversion, for they can more easily distinguish between the two states than others; how highly incumbent is it on ministers and others, to warn their friends and neighbours of their danger in this respect, as well as the world in general. Yet this may be carried too far, because some may have the saving change wrought in them so young, as not to be able to give any account of it: And this caution may be useful, because there is a wo denounced against those who make the heart of the righteous sad, whom God had not made sad. Ministers, however, should set forth, in a particular manner, the universal condemnation that all men are born under, that many may be excited to examine themselves, may be thence led to see their sins, and earnestly pray for deliverance: and when they have well inculcated this truth, they should hold forth the gospel offer of salvation, and that as free from throwing obstacles in the way as possible.

O. What do you mean by throwing obstacles in the way?

N. I mean this: Although faith is the gift of God, yet it is by means it is conveyed;—by the instrumentality of preaching, and by the word of the gospel, and the way should be opened for faith instead of being barred: For instance, no condition should be annexed to the offer of salvation upon believing in Christ, when the Scriptures propose none. When it is said, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*: if it be

added to in this manner, believe on the Lord Jesus and keep his commandments, and thou shalt be saved; to believe on him, with this condition annexed, is impossible.

O. Impossible!

N. I conceive it to be impossible. We are both agreed that to believe in Jesus Christ, is to trust in him as a Saviour—to believe that he will save us. Then if we put it in this order: *Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, and yield him a sincere obedience*, and thou shalt be saved: I judge this to be impossible to the hearer under such a condition; because a man, in such case, cannot trust in the Lord for salvation, as he does not know whether he can perform the condition. There are no such conditions added in the Scriptures, where believing in the Lord is propounded as leading to salvation, for they would destroy the very intention of the offer. *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.* In this style do the Scriptures run; and, to annex conditions to faith, is what I call throwing obstacles in the way of it. Even the condition of belief may be, in some cases, a hinderance. If I say to a man, I will give you this apple, if you will believe that I will give it to you, he could not believe it. God did not do so to Sarah.—He did not say, I will give you a son, if you believe that I will.—But he said, *at this set time I will come in the next year, and thou shalt have a son*—And she believed it: for she had a good foundation for it. So he promised to Abraham a numerous issue, and *he believed in the Lord*: for every faith must have a foundation.

O. What foundation have we to trust in Christ?

N. A very good one. *He came into the world to save sinners—to save that which was lost.* Every man being a sinner and lost, has a good foundation for his belief; but more especially every man that sees himself a sinner can say—Christ came into the world to save sinners, I am a sinner, therefore he came to save me; and if he came to save me, I may trust in him for salvation; and such an one being assured from the knowledge he has gained of God's faithfulness and truth, may have a full trust and confidence that he shall be saved: And this confidence is giving glory to God, as Abraham did when he believed the promise made him; and the Lord will work in such a man every thing necessary to his salvation. He will give him love, which will produce obedience: For obedience is declared and enforced in the gospel, and it is necessary, not only because it is a duty which we owe to God as our Creator, and as expressive of our thankfulness for his goodness as our special benefactor; but it strengthens, and preserves, and confirms our faith: For our faith and good works act and re-act upon each other; but obedience should never be set forth as the condition of our salvation from first to last; for such an idea will prevent it at first, and weaken it afterwards; for as our hearts may get hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and introduce unbelief; so the idea that our salvation depends on our obedience will cause the soul to sink, and our hopes of salvation will flee away, till the soul is again revived by trusting in the Lord alone: According to these words; *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee; because he trusteth in thee.* For if we seek to be justified by the law, Christ will

become of no effect unto us; according to Gal. v. But if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and why? because *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.* And the way to walk in the Spirit is to trust in the Lord Jesus, and seek to be justified in him, according to the tenor of this Epistle to the Galatians. For though some may suppose that the Apostle only means the Jewish law, yet it is evident he means every law that can bring the knowledge of sin; because as the law brings the knowledge of sin, it is the reason given why no man can be justified by it in the sight of God, as it is mentioned in the third of Romans.

As to the petitions which you have quoted from the Psalms; as, *Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people; O visit me with thy salvation, &c. O quicken me in thy righteousness. Let my soul live and it shall praise thee, &c.* They do not seem applicable to the people we have been talking of; for these seem not to be hungry and thirsting after righteousness, but quiet and easy in their present state; like the Jews, who sought for righteousness by the works of the law, and sought it not by faith. *For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.* Moreover, these honest, well-meaning, moral people, cannot come within the description of the righteous, according to your own account; for, instead of feeding and clothing the poor members of Christ, called the elect, they despise them, and are rather prejudiced against them, instead of relieving them, because they belong to Christ, or giving *a cup of cold water to one*

of his little ones, in the name of a disciple. But, I think, those passages relate to such as are awakened to a sense of their danger, and long for the salvation to be had in Christ, that followed after righteousness, as it is mentioned in Isaiah; but yet had not attained to it, therefore, they pray, O visit me with thy salvation, that I may see the felicity of thy chosen, rejoice with thy people, and give thanks with thine inheritance.

O. I am exceedingly glad that I have had this conversation with you; for you have opened my eyes with regard to two errors: one is, that of spiritual or eternal life, consisting only in a persuasion of God's reconciliation, that a trust in God's mercy is of itself eternal life; whereas you have convinced me, or at least in a good measure, that the Spirit of Christ is only essential life, entering through faith as the medium or door. The other is, that those people we call honest, and show some good desires in religious things, will have their lot among the righteous at the day of judgment, though they now have no signs of *having passed from death unto life*: In which opinion I am afraid I have erred, and this fear arises from the apprehension of their future lot.

N. If you are not quite satisfied, in respect to the nature of eternal life, I wish you to consider these further remarks, in order to distinguish more plainly the difference between eternal life and the means by which it is effected. We are told that, *All things pertaining to life and godliness are given through the knowledge of him*; or, to express it more properly, in the words of Scripture, *Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life*.

and godliness, through the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Nothing can show more plainly, that the beginning and continuance of spiritual life is through knowledge, or the word of God; and it should cause us to advert to, and keep in mind our Lord's saying; *Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me: i. e.* If they hear and understand his word, so as to open the door of faith, he will come in.

Mr. Baxter has a similitude to express the difference between the Spirit operating upon the heart, and the indwelling of the Spirit. He compares it to a bird, picking a hole in a tree, and afterwards going in to lodge: for we should not condemn comparisons that appear low; if they will illustrate, that is the thing to be regarded: for our Lord used many similitudes—that of the vine and branches, of the kingdom of heaven being likened to a woman that hid some leaven in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened, and many others, in order, graciously to give us the more ready understanding. Besides this of Mr. Baxter, we may add, that this outward operation may be compared to the rain falling on the earth, which is gradually made softer, till it receives the rain inwardly. So Christ knocks at the door till he softens the heart, and makes it fit and willing to receive him.

And St. Paul informs the saints, *that they were built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building*

fully framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. They were made a spiritual house for the habitation of the Spirit, and all through knowledge communicated from time to time.

We may hence see the benefit of receiving divine knowledge, and may conceive of many not making much progress in religion, and of others not attaining to eternal life, because they know not the way; *being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and because of the blindness of their heart; as the Apostle speaks in his Epistle to the Ephesians: he tells us also, of some who are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. But to the Ephesians he adds, Ye have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus. We read further, that the saints were chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and a belief of the truth; which makes it apparent that the word of the gospel, called the ingrafted word, and the Spirit jointly co-operate in the work of salvation. And the word is the medium, in the same manner as the signs and wonders wrought; for Christ wrought by the Apostle to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God: in like manner the Corinthians were addressed, as being washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God; and it is the same thing with respect to the effect of viewing the glory of God, or looking in hope towards it: For, after saying, *We all with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory; it is added, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. So**

that though I do hold with you, that a persuasion of God's reconciliation is necessary to eternal life, yet I do not think it consists merely in that persuasion. And, in like manner, though I consider the hopes of glory as the means of our sanctification, yet I consider it as done by the power of the Spirit of God. But I must take leave of you for the present, and hope, that at our next meeting, we shall be able to agree on some other religious topics, that may be discussed between us.

O. Farewel. May the Lord enlighten our minds to understand the truth of his Holy Word.

DIALOGUE III.

N. I RECEIVED your letter, wherein you desired my opinion on what is called in Scripture the righteousness of God; whether it is the same as imputed righteousness, or distinct from it; and you expressed a wish that it may be the subject of our next discussion. This, with some other business, has delayed my coming a little longer.

O. I am glad to see you again, especially as it affords us an opportunity of investigating some of the most momentous truths in the gospel of Christ.

N. I would first be glad to hear your opinion on the subject you proposed.

O. As to my opinion, I have not been able to form any settled opinion about it. Much has been written on this subject, and it must be allowed to be a difficult one to treat of; of which the various opinions and nu-

merous writings are a proof. Yet, these also show, that they are generally thought to be either necessary or very useful to be understood.

N. That different constructions have been given to the meaning of the word righteousness in St. Paul's Epistles, and many definitions given to the word faith, the different writings will abundantly show; but, that they should vary so much in their explanations, is a matter of grief to the unbiassed who cannot agree with them.

O. It is concluded by many, that the righteousness of God, so often mentioned, is the same with imputed righteousness; and that this imputed righteousness is, the obedience of our Saviour to the law whilst on earth, which is transferred to the believer, and imputed to him as his righteousness; with which, if he is clothed as his own, he will necessarily stand in the judgment without being confounded. Others think it necessary to have an inherent righteousness to appear in, and not that of another by imputation. But what do you think is meant by the righteousness of God? Is it the personal obedience of Christ imputed to us?

N. Notwithstanding the late Mr. Hervey, and others, have strenuously laboured to make this appear, they cannot support this opinion from Scripture, to the satisfaction of many sincere seekers after the truth. And if it is the truth, is it not surprising that it cannot be made plain to all who wish to know it? Whereas, that faith is imputed to a man for righteousness, is exceedingly plain. That Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, is mentioned again, and again. And to us, also, it shall be imputed, if we believe in him, &c.

O. You don't think, then, that to believe in the imputation of Christ's righteousness, is necessary to salvation?

N. I do not believe it necessary, because there are many sincere Christians who do not, and yet walk in the ways of piety, and have as many signs of belonging to Christ as those who do.

O. I own Mr. Hervey has staggered me, so as sometimes to make me doubtful, and, at other times, wish to be of his opinion, because it might perhaps be necessary.

N. In all likelihood you have been inclined to adopt his sentiments, because he confutes his opponents, in respect to theirs, who hold in inherent righteousness, or seems to confute them, when he makes it plain that there are none righteous in their natural state, no not one, and that all have come short of the glory of God. For those who hold in the imputed righteousness of Christ, that is, his obedience to the law, including also his death, being transferred over to the sinner as his righteousness when it is conferred upon him, mention it as a complete righteousness, and, therefore, sufficient to screen us from wrath; whereas, the righteousness of the best man, without it, is imperfect; and, consequently, insufficient. This, being very plausible, is an argument for its reception as the truth; and they take much pains to prove that our righteousness is imperfect; and, it being easy to do this, they conclude, by establishing this they confirm the first, not considering that there is a medium between the two; and that is a complete righteousness which comes from God, and is imparted to the believer.

O. What then do you think is meant by the righteousness of God?

N. Before I answer the question directly, let us have a little more discourse, that I may see whether I may or may not have wrong ideas about it. I cannot exclude Mr. Locke's idea of this righteousness being considered in more than one sense, and that it means God's showing his righteousness in keeping his promise to Abraham, *that in him should all nations of the earth be blessed*, and performing his oath to Abraham, *that he would grant unto us (his children) that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness, and righteousness, before him all the days of our life*. When this is performed, he shows his faithfulness and truth, and declares his righteousness by or for the remission of sins; and, declares it, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. In this sense it must be taken; and, perhaps, when our Lord says, according to a prophetic declaration in the Psalms, *I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart. My talk hath been of thy truth and of thy salvation. I have not kept back thy loving mercy and truth from the great congregation*. Had he kept back God's loving mercy and truth, he would have hid his righteousness; whereas, by making them known, he declares it. God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, in order to declare his righteousness, by the remission of past sins.

O. Is it not said in the first of Romans, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, and that because the righteousness of God is therein revealed by faith to faith, as it is written, *The just shall live by faith*. Do you take these words, *The just shall live by faith*, to be the revelation of the righteousness of God, mentioned in the text?

N. I do; because the Apostle dwells much upon them, and has quoted them three times in his epistles; particularly in that to the Galatians, where they are opposed to justification by the law: For this is the tenor of the gospel, not only that Christ hath died, but that they who believe in him shall live. Knowing this makes the gospel the power of God unto salvation. In like manner, when the same Apostle speaks of Abraham's believing God being imputed to him for righteousness, he adds; *Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus, our Lord, from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification.* If it was written for our sakes; it was written that we might know that our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, and this is of the same import as, *The just shall live by faith*; and they are both a revelation of God's righteousness, and therefore become the power of God unto salvation. For this being known, gives the gospel, as the instrument, the power mentioned. And this agrees with God's declaring his righteousness by the remission of sins: For we know from these Scriptures, as well as others, that by believing in Christ, our sins are forgiven: For we know that our faith is imputed to us for righteousness; and we also know, that the imputation of righteousness is the forgiving and blotting out sins. *Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.* All the prophets bear witness to this truth, according to St. Peter, when he was preaching to Cornelius. *To him give all*

the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. And, according to St. Paul, The righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe. This is the same as what is quoted from the first chapter—for, being manifested by faith of Jesus Christ unto all that believe, is the same as being revealed by faith to faith. And all these texts concur in showing that those who believe in Christ (or as I interpret it) trust in him for salvation, receive remission of sins. And as all true believers are the children of Abraham, and blessed in him, God shows his faithfulness, or righteousness, in blotting out their sins, that they might serve him without fear, and walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. For the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins causes love in return, according to our Saviour's words in the seventh of Luke, and that in exact proportion to the sins forgiven. Because her many sins are forgiven she loveth much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

I now come to answer your question. The righteousness of God is justification causing love: For we find that St. Paul ranks this righteousness of God with justification as the same thing. *By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested; being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Rom. iii. 20.* Here he speaks of righteousness as the same as being justified. Again, a little further, we read; *To declare his righteousness that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.* For to justify is to make just, as the word plainly imports, and to make just is to make righteous.

O. But how does he make righteous?

N. By giving love, and love is righteousness, for love is the fulfilling of the law. *He that loveth hath fulfilled the law.* Romans xiii. 9, 10.; therefore he is righteous.

O. And how does he give love?

N. As I said before, when he hath brought us to believe in Christ (for we are created in Christ Jesus) he gives us to see through the gospel, that our faith is imputed to us for righteousness; or, as it is in the original, *unto righteousness*, and rendered in the 10th chapter, *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness*: When we are brought, I say, to see this, we perceive our acceptance and reconciliation with God, and that sight fills us with love, and makes us righteous: for he that loveth hath fulfilled the law, and is therefore righteous. The imputation of righteousness is the pardoning and covering sins, and remission of sins produces love according to our Saviour's words above quoted. And when God thus justifies, he is righteous in keeping his promise to Abraham, *In thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed*; and his covenant, wherein he promised to deliver his children, that they might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness: So that the righteousness of God may be considered, both with respect to his faithfulness, and that righteousness which he confers, in the doing of which he keeps his promise. But all this is by the Spirit of the Lord working in us from first to last, teaching us knowledge through his word, and enforcing it by his power. Then we may still say, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength*; and he may be called, *The Lord our righteousness*, and we may be made the righteousness of God in him. 2 Cor. v. 21.

Surely there can be no difficulty in conceiving ourselves safe under his wings, when he upholds us by his word and by his Spirit; when we are so united to him as to be considered as one with him. *For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been made to drink into one spirit. Of this body he is the head and we are the members. And we must be safe when so united, we in him and he in us: As he said, He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. John vi. And we are told by St. John, that love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; and, if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*

Love is the sum of the gospel, we may say the end aimed at both by the law and gospel; and this St. Paul asserts, when he says, *The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. Very excellent things are spoken of righteousness, but not more than of love. The merciful goodness of the Lord endureth for ever and ever upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, even upon such as keep his covenant, and think upon his commandments to do them. O continue forth thy loving kindness unto them that know thee, and thy righteousness unto them that are true of heart. It is continued and endures upon the faithful.*

O. But, is it not said, *Thou shalt show us wonderful things in thy righteousness, O God?*

N. Wonderful things are spoken of love also. St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, prays in this manner, after telling them, that in Christ Jesus they have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him, *I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus, of*

whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

These are wonderful things spoken of love; so there are of righteousness, because they are the same. When St. Paul expresses his wish that he may be found in Christ, *not having*, says he, *mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.* He adds, as one reason for his wish, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead*, which he owns he had not yet attained to; but he followed after, and pressed towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. And when he was about to depart from this world, he expressed his confidence, that as he had kept the faith, there was laid up for him a crown of righteousness, which I conceive to be a crown of love; which is the same as the crown of life, *which the Lord has promised to them that love him.*

O. I don't think that I have thoroughly understood you in what you have been saying in this conversation; I shall be glad, therefore, if you will explain it a little more.

N. The subject we have been treating of is a difficult one, as well as many others; for we read, that, *Great is the mystery of godliness*; therefore it requires great

pains to understand it, and more to make intelligible what we seem to understand. It is no wonder, then, that *some are ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*, especially if their researches are not attended with a suitable conduct in life; for which reason we see the necessity of a divine power and teaching: For the gospel *came not in word only, but in power*. I will, therefore, by the help of the Lord, repeat what I have said, taking, withal, the explanation St. Paul gives us with respect to the new covenant, by giving us to understand that all the hopes we have of heaven are from the promises made to Abraham.

When it pleased God to call Abraham, among other blessings, he said, *In thee and in thy seed* (which is Christ) *shall all nations of the earth be blessed*. And the Apostle says, *As Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness*. Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, *In thee shall all nations be blessed*. So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. These children of Abraham are raised out of the mass of mankind by the power of God; for God is able to raise up from the stones children to Abraham. And he does it by means, as most of the works of Providence are effected thereby. And these children are begotten through the word as well as by power; for *Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God*. After they are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, they are preserved by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Now, salvation being a gradual work, however speedily it may be sometimes performed, these people are wrought

upon by the word, till they come to believe in Christ. This answers to his standing at the door and knocking until it is opened unto him. For they first receive the gospel as true, then hear, and when they understand, they *believe on him to life everlasting*. And this is no small matter. It is the great work of God, agreeing with the answer which our Lord made to the Jews, who asked him what they should do that they might work the works of God? *Jesus answered, and said unto them, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he hath sent.* When they believe in him, Jesus enters into their hearts, and thereby gives life, for he is called the spirit of life. And as he came, that his people not only might have life, but have it more abundantly; he gives love, not only by his power, as Lord of life, shedding forth that divine influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, but by informing their understanding also, by giving them to know, through the Gospel, that the just shall live by faith, and that their faith is imputed to them for righteousness, which being the remission of sins, this knowledge causes them to love God, and to love one another. This love may grow stronger, and sometimes become weaker, partly owing to our improvement, for the spirit is given to every man to profit withal, and partly to the good pleasure of the Lord; for as he divides his gifts severally, as he will, so is the measure of his grace, and the continuance of it. Even the Father withdrew himself from the Son, on the cross; and he once left good Hezekiah to himself, that he might prove him. And his declaring in the Gospel, that the just shall live by faith, is declaring his righteousness with respect to his promise, because believers are the children of

Abraham, who was made the father of many nations; *For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith; for if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise of none effect.* Rom. iv. Therefore, by the bye, I conclude it necessary to trust in the Lord for salvation, that the promise may have effect upon us; as we are made fit for glory through the hopes of glory; not excluding the co-operations of the spirit; which I would have you keep in mind, considering your former opinion.

But not only this declaration in the Gospel manifests God's righteous dealing with respect to his promise; but the very declaration accomplishes his promise, in making the seed of Abraham righteous, and preparing them for the heavenly inheritance.

We need no longer doubt that the righteousness of God is justification or love, when we may hence perceive and know, that love is the fulfilling of the law. For the first and great commandment in the law is, *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* This is the first and great commandment: and the second is like unto it; *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. As to the objection raised by this question, But who does love his neighbour as himself? St. Paul does not seem to have any such idea, when he said, *love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* Nor when he said, *there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit;* and adds this as a reason, *for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of*

sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. It is here said, fulfilled in us, not fulfilled by Christ in our stead. For he paid the penalty of it in our room, and therefore there was no necessity for his fulfilling it also in our room, by his personal obedience, though this personal obedience he necessarily did perform, as he always did all things that pleased the Father. It became him to fulfil all righteousness. The utmost that this expression can be stretched to, is to say, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, by Christ dwelling and living and working in us, enabling us to do all things through his strength; and that he does, by the law of the spirit of life in him, i. e. the doctrine of the Gospel making us free from the law of sin and death; and this deliverance from the law, makes us free from condemnation; and this freedom from condemnation or deliverance from the law, is given, that we, like the woman whose husband is dead, might be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God; and this fruit is love, joy, peace, &c. And this agrees with what is before said, that we are set free, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. When a man views Christ through the gospel, as being made a curse for him, he is set free from all condemnation. And therefore we are exhorted indirectly to look unto him and be saved. There is no God else besides me, a just God and a Saviour, there is none besides me. Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth: For I am God, and there is none else.

O. A thought has come into my mind.

E

N. To state this matter over again, let me do it thus: The Gospel has revealed to me a believer, that I shall live by my faith, and that my faith is imputed to me for righteousness. This knowledge makes me righteous, because it makes me love God; therefore, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, to him that believeth; and the righteousness of God is therein revealed, because he keeps his promise when he makes any of Abraham's children righteous, which he does when he makes them love, because love is the fulfilling of the law. What is your thought?

O. It is, whether the forgiveness of sins, and blotting them out is the same, or whether they are distinct?

N. They are so far distinct, that forgiveness is on the part of God, according to his covenant, *that whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins*. And when this is made known to the believer by the word, accompanied by a divine influence from above, his sins are blotted out and covered. This St. Paul had in mind when he describes, from David the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, *blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*. For it is love that covereth sins, that hideth them from our conscience; so that a man hath no more conscience of past sins; as they are wiped off as it were with a sponge. For the Apostle to the Hebrews observes, that *the sacrifices under the law could never make the comers thereunto perfect*, i. e. perfect as to the conscience; for then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins. And this is plainly experienced.

But let us have recourse to the prophet from whence these Gospel words are taken, that *the just shall live by faith*; they are in Habbak. xi. 1. with only an alteration of one word: the verse begins thus, *I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved. And the Lord answered me and said: Write the vision and make it plain upon the tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, (which I take to be the vision,) his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.* We here perceive in the first place, that the prophet ushers in his vision with a preface, wherein he desires to see from his watch-tower, what he shall answer when he is reproved; and when he is told that the just shall live by faith, he may gather from it this answer, to be made when his conscience reproves him: *thou hast died for me, thou wilt answer for me, O Lord my God.* Then his soul will live. Next, we find that the vision was for an appointed time, and that at the end it would speak. This appointed time was the time of the Gospel being preached, *the mystery of which, was not in other ages made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed, says the Apostle Paul, unto his Holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel.* Now one principal way to make the Gentiles partakers of his promise, was to let them see that they might live by faith, without having any thing to do with the Mosaic law. Then the time of making known this mystery, kept secret so long, was the appointed

time when the vision should speak. And this accounts for a seemingly obscure passage in the Epistle to the Galatians; *Before faith came we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed; for living by faith is revealed in the Gospel; wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after, that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

O. But why is it said, that the just shall live by faith; and why is righteousness said to be revealed by faith to faith? and in the 3d chapter, manifested by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe?

N. The just are those who believe; they become just or righteous in the sight of God, by believing in Christ, for they come up to the terms of the Gospel Covenant, but they know it not till Christ comes into their hearts giving them life, and afterwards if they continue in his word, by teaching them therefrom, that their faith is imputed to them for righteousness, which knowledge with the effusion of the spirit in and through him, makes them love, and then rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And it is said to be revealed by faith, or according to the Prophet; by their faith; because faith is the medium, and it is revealed to them that believe, as the subjects of promise. And it said *unto all and upon all*, because, when the spirit was poured upon them, it was like unto the anointing oil poured upon the head of Aaron, which was the type of this unction, which St. John says the disciples had received. And many in our day, have very sensibly, at times, perceived a great effusion of the spirit filling them with joy unspeakable.

O. However much I approve of what you have said in general, yet there is one argument you used in which I think you lie under a mistake. You said, as Christ had paid the penalty of the law in our room, there was no necessity for his fulfilling it for us also. Now may we not retort this argument upon you, and say, if he has suffered the penalty in our room, there was no necessity for our fulfilling it; which you say we all do, when we attain to love, which is the end of the commandment.

N. But it does not appear, that fulfilling the law is necessary to life. As it became Christ to fulfil all righteousness; so it must become his members to do the same. They attain to life by believing in him, even when they are babes, and have need of milk. He afterwards gives them love that they may have life more abundantly; so that practising such and such virtues, and attaining to such and such graces, *an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

As they could not keep the law, and so could not get life by it, he died for them, that they, believing in his death, might escape death; which they do when he comes into their hearts on their proving that they are children of Abraham by believing in him.—But this righteousness I have been describing is beyond the imputation of righteousness, because this last only saves from death, whereas the other, that of love, in a degree makes us like unto God, and the more like him the happier we shall be; so that is a continued progressive righteousness. For to be saved from death is one thing—to be a partaker of heaven's glory, is another. For St. Peter says, *that by the divine*

knowledge, or the knowledge of Him who hath called us, are given us exceeding great and precious promises, that thereby we might be partakers of the divine nature; for God is love.

O. What is meant by our Saviour's expression of seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears, and understanding with the heart, according to the famous saying in Isaiah?

N. Faith seems to be branched out into three branches, that of seeing, hearing, and understanding. And this is answerable to what Moses told the Israelites, when he made the second covenant with them in the plains of Moab. He tells them of the great temptations which their eyes had seen, the signs and those great miracles; Yet, says he, *the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, eyes to see, and ears to hear unto this day.* He means here an inward seeing, hearing, &c. For there are internal senses in the inner man answerable to the outward. We read of all five in Scripture, such as *tasting the good word, tasting that the Lord is gracious*, feeling after and finding him, &c. And in the days of 'Christ we may understand, by seeing, was meant the seeing the miracles which he wrought and believing they were done by the power of God; by hearing, was meant, hearing the doctrine which he taught, and believing it to be the word of God; and by understanding with the heart, was meant, the coming to such a knowledge of Christ as to open their hearts to receive him, when he would come in and heal them, by blotting out their sins, and giving them the knowledge of the truth; as he himself said to some Jews which believed on him: *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and*

ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. It does not appear in St. Paul's days, that all the disciples had come to this knowledge; for there seems to be different stages of advancement. His expression of *as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*, indicates as much, as well as this other, *Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized unto his death.* For we read elsewhere, *that by one spirit they were baptized into one body, and so became one in him.*

O. But after all you have said about righteousness, may we not yet consider faith as the righteousness of God? It is the gift of God, and it is imputed to us for righteousness. We find it written, *therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my father; and again, unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.* And as he raises up children to Abraham by giving them faith, which is expressly said to be his gift, and, as we read, that they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life, why may not this gift of faith be the gift of righteousness, especially as faith is imputed to us for righteousness?

N. This is a plausible error like many others; but we may still consider faith as only the medium of life, and of knowledge, and of every other blessing derived from the fulness in Christ. It is said, *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.* But if faith be righteousness, this might have been had if he had not died. He died for our offences and rose again for our justification: for if he be *not raised we are yet in our sins.* Believing in God's promises, or that he hath raised up

unto Israel a Saviour, we are entitled to life, and the gift of righteousness, through him, by being united to him as the branch is united to the vine and bringeth forth fruit. For as we have before proved that faith is not life, so neither is it righteousness, but only the door opening and receiving Christ, in whom we are made the righteousness of God; for all the promises and all blessings are to be found in him, not by a fanciful or mystical union, but by an actual union with him, our spirits being intermixed with his as water is with wine. For I am sure that he prayed to his Father that his disciples might be made one in them, as he was in the Father and the Father in him: *that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.* And whosoever will take up his cross daily and follow on to know the Lord, pressing forward towards the mark, will, I believe, know this truth from an heart-felt experience.

O. But there is still one thing, in regard to this subject which I wish to be informed of. You and Mr. Hervey seem in substance to be of the same opinion. You both equally disclaim any salvation to be had by works of obedience, and you both trust in the Lord Jesus, and look to him alone for salvation? why do you then oppose his doctrine?

N. Not for his sake, or those who hold with him, do I oppose it, but for the sake of others who are well meaning people, who cannot see, or find Mr. Hervey's opinion supported from Scripture, and rejecting that, are led back to their own righteousness; thinking that

if they believe the Scriptures, and endeavour to do as well as they can, they will be saved, however imperfect those endeavours may be; and thus they linger on through life betwixt hopes and fears, without the least certainty of what may be their lot hereafter, which is a plain proof to me, that they have never *received the spirit of adoption in their hearts crying, Abba, Father.* Now, though these people cannot receive Mr. Hervey's definition of righteousness, yet if the truth could be put in a clear light, perhaps they might see it, and be brought to *hunger and thirst after righteousness, that they may be filled* according to the promise. This is my reason for seeming to oppose the doctrine of imputed righteousness: it is with a view of illustrating the truth. Besides, this may help to conciliate the affections of Christian brethren to one another.—Those who hold in the imputed righteousness of Christ, may be led to a greater fellowship with others of the brethren in Christ who do not. And these again may be led to see how the former may be saved by righteousness being imputed to them, notwithstanding their opinion; and, having their sins pardoned, be filled with love. And those who are yet ignorant of this righteousness, and as the Apostle says, *go about to establish their own righteousness*, may hereby be stirred up to seek after that righteousness which cometh from God, and which is to be obtained by seeking for it.—*Seek ye me, saith the Lord, and ye shall live.* It is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. For they may be hence brought to consider, that it is absolutely necessary to salvation, to believe in God as a friend, and not as an enemy. The opposite to salvation is the being confounded; and whoever

considers it to be necessary for a man, when brought before God, to believe that he is reconciled, to avoid being confounded, must see the necessity of believing in this reconciliation in order to be saved. For God being reconciled, will not prevent the damnation in a sinner's own breast, unless he also believes it; therefore the death of Christ of itself does not save even one of the elect; because it is through a faith in that atonement that they are saved. And it is for this reason, that justification does not simply consist in God's pardoning a man, but also in making it known to him; therefore the blood of Christ is said to be applied or sprinkled on his heart. Who knows then but from these considerations some may be stirred up to seek and pray earnestly to be quickened in this righteousness, which is of and from God. For Polycharp seemed to desire the prayers of his brethren, that through their prayers he might be justified by the faith of Jesus Christ, which for a long time appeared to me unintelligible. But now this is plain, when we find that God justifies by giving an understanding* by which we see his reconciliation; and this is what St. Paul calls *receiving the reconciliation through Jesus Christ*; and what St. John means by his having *given us an understanding that we may know him that is true*.

Many well meaning people seem to know nothing of the spirit of adoption, and are inclined to doubt it, or to explain away its meaning. But I hope they will reflect on the many witnesses in different ages, and in different countries, and places, that have borne witness to this truth, and consider that one hundred affirmative witnesses in point of evidence, ought to outweigh a thousand negative ones; especially on a point established by holy writ.

CONCLUSION.

O. Well, what have we concluded on? what is the result of our different conversations?

N. The points that we have agreed upon are these:

1st. That eternal life, *according to the promise of life in Christ Jesus*, consists in having Christ himself within us: not by his outward call, stirring us up to repentance, and exciting us to a faith in him, but by the actual indwelling of his spirit.

2d. That the saints are a superior order of the righteous, who yet have life, but not so abundantly as the saints; but as to the two resurrections mentioned, we have not yet come to any determination.

3d. As to righteousness, the sum of what I suppose you agree to, is this: the righteousness of God is his faithfulness to his promise in pardoning the sins of believers, and his letting them know it by his gospel, as well as by a plentiful effusion of his spirit; by which knowledge he makes them actually righteous, because he thereby gives them love, which is righteousness.

CONCLUSION

Q. Well, what have we concluded on? what is the result of our different conversations?
A. The points that we have agreed upon are these:
1. That eternal life, according to the Jewish view, consists in a state of blessedness, in which the soul dwells in the presence of God, and is free from all suffering and sorrow.
2. That the saints are a superior order of beings, who have not yet attained to the fullness of the kingdom of God, but are in the process of becoming saints; and as to the two resurrection mentions, we have not yet come to any determination.
3. As to righteousness, the sum of what I suppose you agree to, is this: the righteousness of God is his faithfulness to his promise in pardoning the sins of believers, and his letting them know it by his gospel; as well as by a plentiful effusion of his Spirit; by which knowledge he makes them actually righteous. Hence he thereby gives them love, which is righteousness.

